

market basket percentage increase" the following: "(which is subject to the productivity adjustment . . .)"

Described in another section.

You would have to be steeped in legalese and minutia to understand what that means, so I am going to interpret it for our colleagues so they will know what that means. It means an \$8 billion cut to hospice. That is what that language means, an \$8 billion cut to hospice.

What does that mean for seniors? According to Victoria Scarborough, who is a nurse in Danville, KY, it means sacrificing patient care. Here is what she had to say about the prospect of an \$8 billion cut to hospice:

We are able to do this—provide excellent health care at low cost—because we are present at the bedside with the patient, sitting at the kitchen table, holding a spouse's hand. We depend upon our highly skilled personnel; our "services" are our people. For hospices the productivity adjustment makes little sense, we need our people.

That illustrates the impact of an \$8 billion cut in hospice.

On the chart behind me, I mention the other areas that are being cut: hospitals, Medicare Advantage, nursing homes, home health, and hospice, which I just described.

Another cut would be to Medicare Advantage. The section of the bill—this is the front page—dealing with the Medicare Advantage reforms, they are called, says "Phase-In Of Payment Based On Fee-For-Service Costs." What does that mean? What does "Phase-In Of Payment Based On Fee-For-Service Costs" mean? It means that \$236 billion in cuts to Medicare will occur—\$236 billion in this program out here, Medicare Advantage, that will occur as a result of this bill. What does that mean, the \$236 billion of cuts to Medicare Advantage? The Congressional Budget Office has said it means fewer benefits for seniors. That is the Congressional Budget Office that says it means fewer benefits for seniors.

Norma Hylton of Lexington, KY, recently wrote:

Mr. Obama says he'll take away the Medicare Advantage plans. . . . This makes us very concerned about the healthcare plans being debated. I truly believe all seniors (maybe others) will suffer.

We know the overall bill raises taxes, raises health insurance premiums for the 85 percent of Americans who already have health insurance, and cuts Medicare by \$½ trillion. This morning, what I tried to do is point out what some of those cuts mean; what taking \$8 billion out of hospice means, this important program dealing with folks who are at the end of life; and what taking \$236 billion out of Medicare Advantage means, as a practical matter, to constituents in my State and across the country.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the second half.

The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the Republican leader just came to the floor, as he has with regularity, to speak to the issue of health care reform. We are all addressing it because it is a major issue we are facing in this Congress, a major opportunity for this country to deal with a health care system that needs to be fixed. There are parts of it that are very strong but parts of it that need to be fixed.

The cost of health care today in America is going up so fast that it is outstripping the ability of individuals and businesses to buy health insurance coverage. We have seen the cost of premiums go up three times faster than wages. The story is obvious. For most workers across America, the choice each year is take-home pay or increased costs for health insurance, and they understand it is unsustainable.

Just 10 years ago, the cost of a health insurance plan for a family of four was \$6,000. This year, it is \$12,000, on average. Ten years from now, it will be \$24,000. To think that 10 years from now people will have to work to earn \$2,000 a month just to pay for the health care for a small family tells you we have to make a change.

The Senator from Kentucky on the Republican side came to the floor to criticize not the Senate bill but the House bill. I would say to the Senator from Kentucky, in all fairness, let's address the Senate bill which will be reported this week. It has literally been reviewed by the Congressional Budget Office for the last 3 or 4 weeks, and it will come out this week and be posted on the Internet for everyone to read in its entirety. At that point, I think the criticisms leveled by the Senator from Kentucky will be put in context. Let's look at the Senate bill.

I would also like to stand here and wave before you a copy of the Republican bill on health care reform, but it does not exist. There is no Republican alternative to health care reform. They are satisfied with the current system. They want to keep the status quo. Like the health insurance companies, they are happy with what exists. But most Americans, and certainly those I represent in Illinois, know better. They know we are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to health care if we have to rely on health insurance companies for permission for coverage because

they are going to say no. Repeatedly, they say no. They deny you coverage when you need it the most, because of a preexisting condition. They deny you coverage because they say it costs too much. They deny you coverage because they don't want to cover a certain drug and they want to challenge you to fight them and appeal that decision. They deny coverage when you decide to change a job or lose a job. They deny coverage when a child reaches the age of 23 and is so-called emancipated and on his own. That is the existing system which the Republicans are supporting. They can support it if they wish, but most Americans do not. Most Americans want to see real health care reform.

Let's spend a moment speaking about Medicare, which the Senator from Kentucky addressed. Our goal is not only to preserve Medicare. As a political party, it was Democrats who created Medicare. It was Republicans who called it socialized medicine and opposed it. Over the years, they have tried to trim back on Medicare benefits, to reduce coverage and turn Medicare over to private insurers. That effort was called Medicare Advantage. When private health insurance companies came before Congress and said: We can do a better job than the government, we can offer Medicare coverage at a lower cost and do it more efficiently because we are the private sector, Republicans accepted that premise and tried to take away Medicare coverage from the government and offer it to private health insurance companies.

What happened? Some private health insurance companies did do it at a lower cost but not all of them. In fact, when it was all said and done, Medicare Advantage, this so-called private rescue of the Medicare Program, ended up costing 14 percent more than the Medicare Program itself. In other words, the Medicare Program was subsidizing private health insurance companies that couldn't keep their promise to deliver Medicare at a lower cost.

The Senator from Kentucky comes to the Chamber to defend those private health insurance companies, defend the subsidy they receive at the expense of Medicare. That is unacceptable and indefensible. Medicare offers the basic plan most Americans trust when they reach the age of 65. We are going to find a way to make sure we put Medicare on sound footing. The future of Medicare is in doubt if we don't deal with the underlying problems in our health care system today.

The Senator from Kentucky and his Republican side have no alternative. They are not offering health care reform or change. They are standing with the health insurance companies, defending Medicare Advantage, which enjoys this healthy subsidy from the Federal Government, and, frankly, not supporting our efforts to bring real reform to health insurance.

I can tell my colleagues the Medicare provisions in the House bill referred to

by the Senator from Kentucky were supported by AARP. They have been supported by other organizations: the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations, the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare. How does the Senator from Kentucky explain that; that they would endorse this approach to Medicare while he says it would destroy Medicare. Frankly, he happens to be mistaken. What we are doing is putting Medicare on a sound financial footing, reducing the increase in cost in medical procedures so Medicare isn't stripped of the basic funds it has.

In fact, when it is all said and done, we find that the House bill, the bill the Senator from Kentucky references, extends the life of the Medicare trust fund by an additional 5 years. How does the Senator from Kentucky explain that? If this is destroying Medicare, how does this health care reform extend its life?

Under the bill, overall national spending on health care would increase by only .8 percent over the next 10 years, compared to current law, even though 34 million Americans would be gaining coverage. Under the bill, out-of-pocket spending on health care would decline by more than \$200 billion over what it would have been by the year 2019.

When it comes to Medicare Advantage, the Senator from Kentucky says it offers more benefits for seniors. I am not opposed to offering more benefits for seniors, but I wish to make sure each and every senior under Medicare has a basic Medicare package they can count on and afford and that Medicare is put on a permanent, sound financial footing. Unfortunately, on the Republican side, they have offered no alternative.

MILCON APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, there is a proposal by the Federal Government that relates to a small town in the State I represent. The town is Thomson, IL. It is in Carroll County. It is 150 miles from Chicago in the northwestern portion. Carroll County is one of the small, rural counties which has been struggling because a lot of employers have gone and a lot of people have moved. Those who remain are hit hard by the recession and desperate for employment. The mayor of Thomson, Jerry "Duke" Hebel, wrote a letter to me and Governor Quinn and others asking for us to consider a prison which had been opened there for expansion as a Federal prison, and the administration is now looking at that possibility. If the Federal Government moves to take over this prison, it could create up to 3,000 jobs in the area, good-paying jobs with benefit packages. It would be a dramatic infusion into the local economy. In fact, it is estimated it would increase growth in the local economy by over \$200 million a year, almost \$1 billion over 4 years.

There is nothing that could be brought more quickly to have that kind of positive impact on a local economy. Part of this is to transfer the detainees from Guantanamo to this new prison and basically close Guantanamo. Guantanamo detainees cost the Government about \$430,000 a year per detainee. It is an extremely expensive facility, manned by the Department of Defense. Of course, we have to provide barracks and accommodations and creature comforts that we want our men and women in uniform to have at Guantanamo. Moving it to Thomson, IL, will dramatically reduce that cost.

There are those who resist this and do not want to see us move forward. I say they don't understand these detainees would be placed in a portion of this Thomson facility run by the Department of Defense. They would be in what is virtually the most secure prison in America today, where there has, incidentally, never been an escape from the supermax facility since it was built. They would be housed in this situation with no visitors. In military prisons, there is no requirement for visitation, even though some critics have said otherwise. They would not be released into the general population under any conditions because we have passed laws saying that will never happen, prohibiting release of these detainees into America. The net result is to create a dramatic number of new jobs.

Today we are going to consider amendment No. 2774 to the Military Construction appropriations bill, offered by Senator INHOFE of Oklahoma. It prohibits any funds in this bill from being used to construct or modify a facility to hold a detainee from Guantanamo. The Obama administration strongly opposes this amendment, and I hope my colleagues will join. This morning Senators REID and MCCONNELL received a letter from Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, and Attorney General Eric Holder, expressing strong opposition to the Inhofe amendment. It reads, in part:

Like the President and numerous others, both Republicans and Democrats, we are convinced that closing the Guantanamo Bay detention center is in the national security interests of the United States. . . . We acknowledge that closing Guantanamo has proven difficult, but that is not a reason for the Congress to preclude this important national security objective. . . . We need to get on with the work of enhancing our national security by finally closing the Guantanamo Bay detention center. The Inhofe amendment would have the opposite effect and would likely prevent further progress on this important issue. We ask that you join us in opposing the Inhofe amendment.

Let me be clear. This amendment would not prevent Guantanamo detainees from being transferred to the United States. Under current law, detainees can be transferred to the United States to be prosecuted. The Inhofe amendment does not change this. Here is what it would do: It would

prohibit the Obama administration from upgrading security at any facility in the United States where Guantanamo detainees would be held. That is unwise and unprecedented. It certainly is not in the best interests of homeland security in the United States.

Let's take a hypothetical situation. In fact, let's move beyond a hypothetical. Let's take a real-life example. Last Friday, Attorney General Eric Holder announced five Guantanamo detainees who were allegedly involved in the 9/11 terrorist attack will be prosecuted in Federal court in the Southern District of New York. They include Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the alleged mastermind of the 9/11 attacks. I agree with Michael Bloomberg, the Republican mayor of New York, who recently said:

I support the Obama Administration's decision to prosecute 9/11 terrorists here. It is fitting that 9/11 suspects face justice near the World Trade Center where so many New Yorkers were murdered. . . . I have great confidence that the [New York Police Department], with federal authorities, will handle security expertly.

Federal courts are clearly capable of prosecuting terrorists. Since 9/11, we have successfully prosecuted 195 terrorists in our article III Federal courts. I strongly support the Attorney General's decision to prosecute these suspects in Federal court. But regardless of how one feels about the issue, every Member of Congress should know what the Inhofe amendment means. Under the Inhofe amendment, the government could not spend any money to upgrade security facilities in New York City to make certain any of these terrorist suspects are held safely. We would be prohibited from spending money because Guantanamo detainees are involved. How much sense does that make? If there is the need to upgrade security so they can be tried in a safe environment with no danger to the people of New York City, we want to spend that money, if necessary. The Inhofe amendment stops us, precludes us from spending that money. Why would the Senator from Oklahoma want to tie the President's hands?

In his zeal to keep open Guantanamo, he is trying to limit this administration. I think that is a mistake. He believes—others do as well—we should not close Guantanamo. I agree with GEN Colin Powell. He said: If I had my way, I wouldn't close Guantanamo tomorrow. I would close it this afternoon. He knows, and we know, it has become a dangerous symbol to the world, a dangerous symbol being used by terrorist organizations to recruit more for their ranks. That is why GEN Colin Powell has called for the closure of Guantanamo. That is why it has also been called on to close by former President George W. Bush, who on eight different occasions called for its closure. GEN David Petraeus has also called for its closure, as has ADM Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as Robert Gates, Secretary of